

Work and Archetypes

Work is done by every living thing. The monkey has to climb the tree to get to the fruit. The mole has to dig a hole to get the juicy grubs. Even plants have to do something to get something.

Everything in the universe can be understood as forms of energy. Energy is the capacity for doing work.

Work takes place within the continuum of time and space. Work does things with energy and matter within a time context and a spatial context. Work of nature and living things. Work isn't unnatural. Work is necessary. Life requires not idleness but work.

Living things desire pleasure, gratification and also protection from harm. Work gets it. The human body has a set of instincts for getting pleasure and a set of instincts for protecting itself.

The human mind has the ability to repress these instincts but the energy is still there. The human mind has an imagination, capable of picturing possible ways that things might work and of mapping out scenarios.

The energy of the repressed instincts can affect the imagination. The repressed instincts are given form by the imagination and Carl Jung says that this is what he means by "archetypes".

Archetypes appear in dreams, illusions or in stories created by the imagination.

Hack writers have a long collective history of taking these archetypes from mythology, folk tales, fairy stories, novels and newspaper reports of ghosts, UFOs, heroes, "bad guys" and serial killers and re-working them into endless Hollywood and TV regurgitations. Something like: Thor versus Cinderella in a battle of the Gods with a temporary interlude in which Jack the Ripper and Baba Yaga join forces with Robin Hood and the Tiny Tot Wizards to defeat the aliens from the flying saucer.

By contrast, good writers work and struggle in their lives and eventually write wonderful books of knowledge learned at first hand experience. Look at the lives of writers like John Steinbeck and George Orwell. They may not have been plaster saints but, boy, they had sure been through some experiences.

I stopped watching television in the mid-1970s because there were three channels and they all broadcast mostly rubbish. People used to buy the TV, pay for the licence and then sit watching the "idiot box" night after night in vain hope that something good would come on. They would admit that what they were watching was rubbish but would still sit there watching, wanting to get their money's worth.

Next day at work people typically would say "*Did you see so-and-so on TV last night? Load of rubbish! I don't know why I watch the thing.*"

People seemed amazed that I could happily live without television or movies. I told them about the advantages of reading books but they seemed doubtful and furrowed their brows.

From the mid-70s until the 90s all I needed was books. My big sister tried to emotionally blackmail me into accepting an old TV from her as a gift in 1983 because (she said) isolating myself and reading books wasn't "normal" and "normal people watch television" and she would be insulted if I didn't agree to have her crappy old television. None of which cut any ice with me. Quite the opposite. I dug my heels in against the concept of mandatory tele-screens.

I eventually got a television in 1992 when I was 39 years old because it had come to my attention that TV had become less racist, less sexist, less homophobic and less xenophobic than previously. I had a small screen portable black and white set in case I ever wanted to bother with it. It was true that the programmes had become less bigoted but they still didn't often reach the level of great storytelling.

I've thought a lot about the shortcomings of screen writing in general and, as far as I can see, it comes down mainly to the need to get screenwriters to do other jobs which will provide them with the wealth of experience to improve their writing. Only by genuine hard experience in a wide range of situations can we develop storytellers who are not merely selling us continual remixes of the same traditional stories and genres.

Currently as I write this the screenwriters of America are on strike against having their hackneyed plots written by machines. Good luck to them. I wish them success in their campaign but I still say it's hilarious that, of all people, the writers who saturate the world in stereotypes and repetitive plot lines (which always seem to be written by a mechanical formulaic process) are the ones who are objecting to an actual machine doing the same thing.